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Printing in Riau

Two Steps Toward Modernity

Introduction

Printing in the Malay archipelago started with the establishment of Dutch rule in Batavia in 1619. For a long time Batavia would be the most important center of printing in the archipelago, although there were other places in the region where Malay works were printed, such as Melaka and Penang. Only with the establishment of Singapore in the beginning of the nineteenth century did a new center for Malay printing come into being. In Singapore an indigenous industry flourished during the last decades of the nineteenth century, predominantly making use of the technology of lithography, which needs lower capital investment compared to printing with movable type.¹

The technique of lithographic printing was probably introduced in the region by British missionary Medhurst. He started a lithographic press in Batavia in 1828 to print Malay-Arabic, Javanese, and Chinese scripts without needing a large amount of capital to buy different kinds of type. When the American and British missions moved to China in the 1840s, the mission press in Singapore was left with the Reverend Keasberry, who had learned the trade of printing at the Parappatan orphanage run by Medhurst in Batavia. In 1839 Keasberry moved to Singapore where he established a self-supporting mission with a school and a print shop. There he worked together with the Malay language teacher and prolific author Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munsyi, who also had learned the printing technique from Medhurst (Hill 1970:124). Gallop rightly calls Abdullah the 'Father of Malay Printing' (Gallop 1990:97-8), as it was primarily through him that

¹ Lithography is based on the chemical principle of the antagonism of grease and water: a design is drawn with a greasy crayon on a flat stone, the stone is moistened and a grease-based ink is applied to the stone. The damp parts of the stone will repel the ink and only the design is inked. Then the design can be printed through direct contact with paper. The design can be drawn directly on the stone with crayon. However, when the design is in the form of writing, the use of transfer paper is indispensable otherwise the words should be written mirrorwise. Therefore, the writing is done with lithographic chalk on a sheet of transfer paper which is then moistened and gently rubbed on the stone until the impression is settled on the stone. This technique dispenses with the need for a multitude of different type fonts which had to be ordered and needed high investments. The basic requirements for the lithographic printing process are special stones, lithographic ink, lithographic chalk, transfer paper, printing paper, and a press (Fawzi A. Abdulrazak 1990:70-3).

the technology of lithographic printing was introduced to Malay society.²

After printing a few books on the typographic press at the mission, the co-operation between Keasberry and Abdullah resulted in the 1840s and 1850s in beautifully printed, multicolored lithographs yielding *de luxe* editions of Malay texts written, copied and edited by Abdullah. One of the first of these lithographed works was Abdullah's autobiography, *Hikayat Abdullah*, which Gallop calls the 'most ambitious and impressive Malay work ever printed in the Straits Settlements by that time' (Gallop 1990: 98).³

In the 1860s some Muslim printers established lithographic print shops in Singapore, heralding the emergence of an indigenous printing industry that would flourish in the last two decades of the century (Proudfoot 1994:32-4). This industry was in the hands of a small number of men hailing primarily from the north coast of Java who distributed their books throughout the archipelago. The transition to typographic printing, which was induced by the appreciation of Malay readers for typographically printed books and newspapers, proved too costly for most printers and the industry was concentrated around a few European-owned publishing houses. Prior to this emergence of Muslim printers in Singapore, there were at least three places in the archipelago where indigenous printers had been operating lithographic presses. The first work printed by a non-European-sponsored printer was a Koran printed by a certain Ibrahim bin Husayn in the print shop of Haji Muhammad Azhari in Palembang in 1848 (Peeters 1996:182-3). In 1853 an anonymous Muslim devotional text was printed by the Arab Husayn al-Habsyi in Surabaya in 1853 (Kaptein 1993). Although Peeters mentions a few other titles that were possibly published by Azhari in Palembang, and there is, of course, the 1854 edition of the Koran discussed by Von de Wall (1857), lithographed books printed in the Malay archipelago around the middle of the nineteenth century were extremely rare.

The third place in the archipelago where a lithographic press was established in the 1850s was on the island of Penyengat, the seat of the Viceroy of Riau. Among the dignitaries at the Penyengat court was the prolific writer and Islamic scholar Raja Ali Haji, who is venerated as a cultural hero in Riau until the present day. Through the works he wrote in a period of about twenty-five years (1847-72), he established a literary tradition that was continued by members of the Rushdiah Klab, an association of writers active on the island of Penyengat from the 1890s

² Clear evidence of this became available through a publication by Jeroen Peeters (1996:182) that discusses a recently discovered Koran, printed in Palembang in 1848. In the colophon of that Koran Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munsyi is mentioned as the teacher of the individual who printed the book.

³ Reproductions of frontispieces of books lithographed at Keasberry's Mission Press can be found in *Pages from Yesteryear*, plates 2 and 4; see also Gallop 1990:91.

until the 1920s. Raja Ali Haji gained his reputation through the publication of his poems and other works. He was indeed preoccupied with the benefits a printing press held for not only his reputation but also that of the Penyengat court. Therefore, it is not surprising that at least two of the four surviving products printed on the lithographic press in Penyengat are written by Raja Ali Haji.

Raja Ali Haji in Print

In letters addressed to Roorda van Eysinga in Batavia, Raja Ali Haji states that he received two editions of Malay stories typographically printed in Batavia by the addressee, the *Taj al-Salatin* and the *Hikayat Sri Rama*. The first one particularly impressed the Malay author as it was printed with the Malay text in Arabic script on the right-hand page and the Dutch translation on the left-hand page. Furthermore, he could find no errors in the text compared with his own handwritten copy. Four months after the first letter, in June 1846, on reception of the second title that was sent by Roorda van Eysinga as a gift, Raja Ali Haji sent a handwritten copy of his *Syair Sultan Abdul Muluk* to Batavia, hoping that the Dutch official was willing to print it.⁴ Roorda van Eysinga was apparently very impressed by the poem and wanted to publish it under Raja Ali Haji's name with a Dutch translation, so 'his friend would become famous in the east and the west'.⁵

The poem, which was published by Roorda van Eysinga with a Dutch translation in the *Tijdschrift voor Neêrlandsch Indië* in 1847, established Raja Ali Haji's name as a poet among Dutch administrators. At the time the Dutch were tied up with defining a standard form of Malay that could serve as language for Bible translation as well as communication with the indigenous courts outside Java, and also could be used in the textbooks for the educational system they were establishing. They regarded the language written and spoken in the Johor region on the most southern tip of the Malay peninsula and the islands off the coast as Malay in its purest

⁴ The relevant passage reads: 'jika sahabat kita cetak dengan huruf bahasa Melayu, yang kita banyak harap juga, boleh sahabat kita kirimkan kita satu, supaya boleh kita baca-baca. Demikianlah adanya' (Roorda van Eysinga 1847:291). In the recently published edition of Raja Ali Haji's letters we stated that Raja Ali Haji also sent a copy of the *Syair Abdul Muluk* to a printer in Singapore in 1845 (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:11). However, I am now inclined to go along with Proudfoot who dates this edition Muharam 1291 [March 1874] not 1261 [February 1845]; see Proudfoot 1993:104-5. The three printers mentioned as publishers in the colophon were active in the 1870s.

⁵ 'Kita heran tercengang daripada arif bijaksananya dan pahamiannya sahabat kita. Maka hikayat itu kita suruh cetak atau tera serta menzahirkan dengan nama sahabat kita supaya jadi masyhur pada sebelah dunia pihak masyrik dan maghrib itu. Lagipun hendaklah kita salinkan itu pada bahasa Olandawi, supaya nama sahabat kita dengan nama kita jadi disebut orang dengan puji²an yang patut itu adanya' (Roorda van Eysinga 1847:294).

form. For the description of this standard form of Malay, the Dutch needed material that was written in the places they had designated as the cultural center of the Malay world. Therefore, Raja Ali Haji's poem, which, as he emphasized, was written in the language of Johor (Roorda van Eysinga 1847:291), came at the right moment and was favorably received by the Dutch scholarly community of Batavia.

Reference to this desperate need for new Malay material was made in the editorial note of another poem by Raja Ali Haji published in the Dutch annual *Warnasarie* in 1853. It was the only poem in Malay that the editors published in the journal that appeared for a period of about ten years. The untitled poem was about Raja Ali Haji's recovery from an illness with the help of a Dutch naval physician. In the footnote to the poem the editors condescendingly wrote that 'even though the poem does not amount to anything much, it is published as proof that not all interest in literature has disappeared with the native. Hopefully he will soon decry the need for it. It would be great proof of progressing civilization.'⁶

Other 'proof' followed swiftly. In 1854 another of Raja Ali Haji's poems, *Gurindam Duabelas*, was published in the respected Dutch journal of the Batavian Society by the administrator-historian Netscher. Possibly the *Syair Nasihat*, which was published by Netscher in the same journal in 1858, can also be ascribed to Raja Ali Haji.⁷ Through the publication of these poems, Raja Ali Haji's reputation as a poet was firmly established at the end of the 1850s. When the task of the compilation of a Malay grammar and dictionary was assigned to civil servant Hermann von de Wall in 1855, there was probably little doubt where he should be stationed and whom he should contact in order to collect his data. In 1857 Von de Wall

⁶ The Dutch note reads: 'De Redactie van *Warnasarie* neemt dit stuk van den broeder des onderkonings van Riouw op, tot een bewijs dat – hoe gebrekkig dan ook deze poging zij – alle lust voor letterkunde nog niet bij den inlander te loor ging. Mogt hij de behoefte daaraan weldra ontwaren! Het zoude een groot bewijs van vooruitgaande beschaving zijn.' (Raja Ali Haji 1853:113) See also the introduction to the *Syair Nasihat* (Netscher 1858:67), where Netscher makes a similar remark.

⁷ The poem was published in 1858 with a Dutch translation by Netscher and was ascribed to Raja Ali, viceroy of Riau. There is, however, no conclusive evidence that the viceroy actually wrote the poem; see Abu Hassan Sham (1993:59, 65), where he expresses his doubts about Raja Ali as author of the poem. The only statement Netscher made in this edition was that viceroy Raja Ali had dedicated the poem to one of his friends, a civil servant in Batavia (Netscher 1858:67). The Dutch had problems in understanding the family connections between the members of the viceregal family at Penyengat, as one can see in the editorial note in *Warnasarie* (see note 5) that mentions the author as brother of the viceroy, which should be cousin. The same mistake is made by Netscher in his edition of the *Gurindam Duabelas* (Netscher 1854:11) and Roorda van Eysinga in his edition of the *Syair Abdul Muluk* (Roorda van Eysinga 1847:285). So the present writer is completely in line with Dutch traditions of having difficulties with establishing the actual family connections when he calls Raja Khalid Hitam a son of Raja Ali Haji, which should be grandson (Van der Putten 1995:72).

came to Riau where he would become good friends with his main Malay informant, Raja Ali Haji.

A year prior to Von de Wall's arrival in Riau, a lithographic press was set up on Penyengat that was used to print a chart with astrological calculations, the *Saat Musytari* (Auspicious Times) on 18 March 1856. In 1857 Raja Ali Haji also had a treatise on Malay grammar and writing printed on this press. Thirteen years later this textbook, entitled *Bustanul Katibin* (Garden of Writers), was reported to be used at schools in Johor and Singapore where it had been reprinted (Von de Wall 1870:569). As was the case with the other lithographic presses in Surabaya and Palembang as well as the first presses that started in Singapore the following decade, the Penyengat press was short lived. This seems to have been typical of the first stage of indigenous printing: the new technology was implemented but there was still no notion of disseminating the products on a commercial basis in the absence of a large reading public to whom one could sell them (Proudfoot 1994:32). The press was just used as a substitute for the scribe to make more than one copy of the manuscript. With the lithographic press the scribe only had to make one copy on the lithographic transfer sheets and the press could print any number of copies.⁸ Prior to the advent of printing only a few people possessed a unique copy of a certain text in handwriting that often was regarded as sacred or at least held in high esteem. Those who wanted to read or own the text had to borrow or buy it from the proprietor who often was very reluctant to lend it out and asked payment as 'security' (Proudfoot 1994: 44-5; Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:6). The one who borrowed the text could read it and often had a copy made by a professional scribe, which proved to be expensive.

In his letters to the Bible Society, Dutch Bible translator H.C. Klinkert refers to the difficulties connected with and the high costs of obtaining manuscripts in the Riau area several times. Klinkert was sent to Riau to improve his proficiency in Malay in order to revise the translation of a Malay Bible that had been published in the eighteenth century. In the beginning of his stay in Riau, in 1864, he reports that 'it is very hard to purchase manuscripts, one can borrow them and have them copied, but then one copy of, say, the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* would cost f 50, if not more.'⁹ Printed texts were easier to come by and cheaper and consequently stimulated the dissemination of literacy among the population. Again Klinkert gives a clear example when he complains about the dif-

⁸ See Klinkert's letters referred to below. These letters can be found in the archives of the Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap in Haarlem, the Netherlands.

⁹ Letter from Klinkert to the Dutch Bible Society of 17 June 1864. The original text reads: 'Handschriften zijn hier moeilijk te koop te krijgen, men kan ze leenen en dan laten afschrijven, maar dan komt één handschrift b.v. de *Hikajat Hang Toewah* op een f 50 testaan, zoo niet meer.'

ficulties of buying manuscripts in Riau because they are in the hands of the diginitaries (who are not inclined to lend them out). 'However, in Singapore one can find them in the *kampongs*, and if they are not for sale, one can borrow and copy them. I have bought a *hikayat* from that Malay Christian for one dollar [...] It is lithographed in Singapore, but neither the name of the printer nor the name of the author are mentioned.'¹⁰

When he was in Riau, Klinkert collected many texts and occasionally presented an edited copy or an article to one of the scholarly journals in Holland or Batavia. The publishers complained to Klinkert about the handwriting of his scribe, which induced him to ask for his own printing press. After enclosing a product from Keasberry's press in Singapore and referring to new developments in lithographic printing in America, Klinkert filed a request for a lithographic press with the Bible Society. 'Such a complete press does not cost more than f 400 to f 500. Every bookseller in Singapore owns one. If I had a press, I as well as my scribes need not exert ourselves in vain, only to cause even more trouble in Holland, but by only writing it once it would be printed at the same time. Among the 90 manuscripts at my disposal now, many could be made available to scholars in Europe or elsewhere and to natives, merely at the low costs of the paper, the ink and the payments for the press.'¹¹ He also reported that there would be no problem finding people who could work the press, but in the following letter he withdrew his request because the printing would take too much of his time.

Klinkert did not give any information about the existence of a lithographic press on Penyengat. So, apart from the few extant copies of the printed editions from 1856-7, no information on these first products of this lithographic press in Penyengat has yet surfaced. This is even more puzzling as Von de Wall wrote a report on the Koran printed in Palembang in 1854, emphasizing the importance and the good that was to come of the spread of printing among the native population (Von de Wall 1857:193). Quoting a letter from the resident of Palembang, he offered relevant information about this press: the printer, Muhammad Azhari, had bought the press at f 500 in Singapore on his way back from Mecca and was very

¹⁰ Letter from Klinkert to the Dutch Bible Society of 2 August 1864. The original text reads: 'doch op Singapoera treft men ze in de kampongs aan, en al is 't dat ze niet te koop zijn, dan kan men ze toch ter afschrijving krijgen. Eene hikajat kocht ik voor een Spaansche mat van dien Maleischen christen [...] Zij is te Singapoera gesteendrukt, doch naam van drukker noch schrijver of opsteller wordt vermeld.'

¹¹ Letter from Klinkert to the Dutch Bible Society of 15 March 1866. The original text reads: 'Zulk eene pers compleet kost niet meer dan f 400 à f 500. Alle boekverkoopers in Singapoera zijn daarvan voorzien. Had ik zulk eene pers dan zou ik en mijne schrijvers geen vergeefsche moeite behoeven te doen om in Nederland nog meer moeite te veroorzaken, maar met slechts eenmaal te schrijven zou een werk ook gedrukt zijn. Van de 90 HSS. thans onder mij alleen berustende zouden er vele in de handen der geleerden in Europa en elders en ook van den inlander kunnen komen, tegen de geringe kosten van papier, inkt en de aflossing der pers.'

proficient at printing with it (as he proved by writing a short poem on the transfer paper and printing it within a few minutes' time). The poem was dedicated to Resident Van der Ven, who had come to the print shop to obtain some information about it, as was required by the Batavian Society. Azhari printed a few hundred copies of the Koran that sold fast at f 25 a copy, but no other texts 'worth mentioning' (!) were printed on this press (Von de Wall 1857:196-7).

It is clear that indigenous printing, especially in Riau, was of interest to the European scholars, as it would make more texts in 'pure' Malay available to them.¹² It is therefore even more surprising that a man such as Von de Wall did report on a press in Palembang that he had not seen, but failed to report on the press nearby, in Penyengat. He had already seen a copy of the printed *Bustanul Katibin* upon his arrival in Riau in 1857 (Von de Wall 1862:207), but waited with a review of the book until he was asked to do so and was sent a copy by the Batavian Society (Von de Wall 1870). In these articles he merely states that the text was lithographed in Riau, but does not give any details on the press, which is incompatible with the great importance he attached to indigenous printing in his introductory remarks to his report on the press in Palembang. If it were not for the few copies still extant of the texts printed on Penyengat and the references in Von de Wall's publications, the existence of a lithographic printing press on Penyengat would be pure conjecture.

However, the existence of a lithographic press on Penyengat is indicated by the preservation of two more texts. In his second supplementary catalogue of the collection of the Batavian Society, Van der Chijs lists a book that he describes as a poem (*syair*) printed in 1868/69 (1285H) in Riau (Van der Chijs 1877:83). It is not clear where he obtained this information, because the book does not contain any information on where or when it was printed. The book comprises a text of thirty-seven pages and a title page with an explanation of the word *awai*, but without any mention of the printer or the author. The poem is an elaboration on the meaning of the word *awai* (disappointed; to miss one's mark). It tells the story of a merchant who fails twice in his attempts to marry the woman he is in love with.

The explanation on the title page of the poem reads: '*Awai*, that is, the conduct of a person who is very eager to succeed in something, but suddenly does not, that is called *awai*. It is an illustration taken out of a Malay dictionary.'¹³ There is little doubt about which 'Malay dictionary' is meant in the title as there was only one monolingual dictionary at that time and the explanation on the title page of the *syair* is an almost verbatim

¹² See the contribution by Henk Maier to this volume.

¹³ '*Awai* yaitu suatu pekerjaan seorang mengharap ia akan hasilnya tiba2 tiada diperolehnya bernamalah *Awai*. Maka itulah taswirnya yang dikeluarkan kitab kamus Melayu' (Van der Putten 1997).

copy of the explanation of the word in this dictionary by Raja Ali Haji that was published sixty years after this poem was first printed (Raja Ali Haji 1986/87:149).

In his monolingual dictionary, the *Kitab Pengetahuan Bahasa*, Raja Ali Haji often incorporated poems to explain words that he was hesitant to explain in a simple (*mufrad*) manner. In his correspondence with Von de Wall he referred to certain words that had to be explained in elaborated explanations through *syair* or small stories, for instance the word *gelar* (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:97). Besides his reluctance to give a concise explanation of a word, he also held the opinion that a dictionary with stories and poems would encourage the younger generation to study and appreciate their language (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:24). In another text, *Silisilah Melayu dan Bugis*, Raja Ali Haji indicated that he used *syair* 'to give his readers a sense of pleasure when they are tired, weary, or fed up' and also that he would insert a *syair* to recapitulate a scene he described in prose in order 'to reinforce it in the reader's memory' (Matheson 1983:10-11). Thus, there is little doubt that Raja Ali Haji wrote the *Syair Awai* and had it printed. Most likely, it was printed separately from the dictionary because it had grown too big in comparison with the other explanations. After its publication the poem proved to be a very popular story, as different Singapore printers reprinted it at least five times in the 1880s.¹⁴

A Malay translation of the *Futuh al-Syam* based on an Arabic original written by al-Wakidi provides the fourth proof of lithographic work executed in Riau in the second half of the nineteenth century. A colophon is added to this book stating that the text was printed in Riau on the island of Penyengat on 7 July 1879 (17 Rajab 1296H). However, again apart from the copies extant in the libraries, I have not been able to find any other information about this product of a lithographic press in Riau. So there are no data on the provenance of the press, who the proprietor was, who the printer was, and where he had learned how to work the press. We can only surmise that the press was bought in Singapore, as was the case with the press in Palembang. The other requirements for lithographic printing could be purchased in that same town and the printer may have been one of the many Arabs visiting the region or living in Riau. The press was probably owned by the Viceroy and his family as they were the men of substance in the area. Although there may be printed texts lost, we may assume that the printing activities revolved around Raja Ali Haji as the central figure in the

¹⁴ I have not been able to compare all the editions of this text, but a cursory comparison between the *Syair Awai* with the *Syair Pengantin Juragan Awai*, lithographed in Singapore in 1885, and the *Syair Pengantin Yaitu Khoda Awai*, printed on a lithographic press in 1887, shows that they appear to be very close to the original text. The other editions have a similar title, so if one is allowed to judge by the title alone they all concern the same text; see Proudfoot 1993:399-400.

literary community of the region. It is therefore puzzling indeed that he did not refer to the press on Penyengat in any of his letters sent to Von de Wall during a period of fifteen years (from 1857 to 1872). The only references in his letters were requests for a printing press filed with the colonial government, probably for a typographic press. Perhaps the books printed on that kind of press were editions he regarded as genuinely printed books, while the lithographed editions were too close to the manuscript tradition to be considered congruous with changes taking place all around him.

In the letters from Raja Ali Haji to von de Wall there is no mention at all of any existing or working printing press in the area. This is even more surprising as Raja Ali Haji emphasized several times the importance of printing in his letters to Von de Wall and wanted to have his monolingual dictionary printed through the agency of his European friend. The first time Raja Ali Haji mentions a press in the correspondence is in a letter from 22 April 1862. Prior to this letter the Malay author probably had requested a press from the colonial government, and in a meeting with the Dutch resident he was told to make a calculation of the costs of the press (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:54). Since there is no further mention of this press during that time it is likely that the request was rejected by the colonial government. In an undated letter addressed to Haji Ibrahim, another one of Von de Wall's Malay informants, Raja Ali Haji probably refers to the same request and gives his motives for requesting the press: it would not cost him a penny (*tiada jadi kesakitan barang suatunya*), it would boost his reputation, and it would be of use to the colonial government as well as to the Malay kings (*menjadi nama kemuliaan dan faedah kepada gupernemen, serta berhamburan nama itu kepada raja2 Melayu dan lainnya*) (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:128).

Ten years later Raja Ali Haji filed another request for a printing press with the colonial government. This time more details are available as he asks for an amount of \$830.¹⁵ He is also very clear about what he wants to print, namely, his monolingual dictionary that eventually was published after his death in Singapore under the title *Kitab Pengetahuan Bahasa*. Raja Ali Haji had been working on this dictionary in close connection with the work he did for Von de Wall (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:106-8).

Again there is no further mention of this press in the remaining letters, so probably this request, too, was turned down by the government. However, Raja Ali Haji had high hopes that his request would be granted, since two weeks after his letter referred to above he sent a letter (dated 27 March 1872) in which he reports about his plans to invite a Singapore-based

¹⁵ This would amount to more than f 2,000 at an exchange rate of f 2.75 to the dollar; see Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:161. Comparing this amount to the reported price of a lithographic press of about f 500, it seems likely that the request here concerns a more expensive typographic press.

printer hailing from Riau (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:108-9). The name of this printer was Muhamad Nur bin Haji Muhamad Said who was the publisher of a lithographed version of the *Usul al-Din*, printed in 1862, and of the *Tanbih al-Ikhwan*, printed in 1864 (Proudfoot 1993:507, 537). His name does not appear in any printed book of later date and it is not clear if he actually came to Riau in 1872. The fact that Raja Ali Haji wanted him to come to Riau is an indication of connections existing at that time between the printers in Singapore and the writer in Riau.

Central to Raja Ali Haji's thoughts about printing were the positive effects printed books could have for his reputation as well as for Pen-yengat's. This becomes clear in the concerns he expressed over the *Hikayat Golam*, a text Von de Wall had asked him to read that was typographically printed in Batavia by the Dutch firm Lange in 1860 (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:159). Raja Ali Haji found many errors in the printed copy, especially where the Arabic was concerned. The text had been translated into Malay by Haji Abdul Wahab, a religious teacher and onetime mentor of both Raja Ali Haji's father and Viceroy Jafar. The good name of this teacher and the reputation of his home island were causes of great concern to him: 'the reason that I'm deeply distressed is that the *hikayat* hails from Riau, from the island of Penyengat'.¹⁶ Raja Ali Haji felt ashamed because of the many errors in the printed text and he called for Von de Wall's help to clear his teacher's and his own reputation, for, 'if the text would not be amended my shame and my teacher's shame will persist'.¹⁷

Another reason why Raja Ali Haji wanted a press was that the work he carried out for Von de Wall was affecting his constitution. He was an old man troubled by all kinds of ailments. If he did not have a printing press at his disposal he would have to make several drafts by hand before he could give the text to a scribe to copy. Furthermore, if the government was willing to pay for the press it would reduce the financial burden of having to pay for the scribes, which weighed heavily on his already bad financial situation (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:128).

Still, it remains puzzling why Raja Ali Haji asked for a printing press when there was a press on the island. It seems to support the surmise that Raja Ali Haji regarded the lithographic press as a less sophisticated device that produced texts very similar to the old-fashioned handwritten ones, whereas really important texts were printed on typographical presses. The terms Raja Ali Haji used to refer to book printing are also suggestive in this respect. There are three Malay stems which can be used to refer to 'printing', namely, *cap*, *cetak* and *tera*. The word *tera* is skipped in his

¹⁶ 'Syahdan yang saya terlalu dukacita melihatnya, sebab karena hikayat itu keluarnya dari Riau pulau Penyengat ini' (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:61).

¹⁷ 'Jikalau tiada betulkan maka jadilah berpanjangan aib saya dan aib ulama saya' (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:65).

dictionary and it is not mentioned in any of his letters. In his dictionary, however, he makes a clear distinction between the other two words, *cap* and *cetak*. He glosses *cap* with a definition that could be summarized with the word 'seal',¹⁸ while defining *cetak* as 'a way to write or compose; a mold is made possibly out of lead; or one writes on paper or on flower-patterned fabric. In no time one or more sheets can be finished'.¹⁹ He clearly designates *cetak* as the appropriate term for letterprinting. In his letters, ironically, he uses derivatives of the two words indiscriminately and sometimes alternates between them. For instance, in a note on a religious text that was sent to him by Von de Wall, Raja Ali Haji states that the text was in printed form (*bercap*), that it was printed (*mengecapnya*) during the reign of the Turkish Sultan Abd al-Majid Khan and that it had been printed (*dicetak*) before 1844. In this same note he also uses the Arabic word *tab* with the same meaning (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1985:48). Notwithstanding the fact that Raja Ali Haji in some instances uses the words alternately, he only uses *cetak* or *tab* when referring to the (typographic) printing press that he asks from the colonial government. The Arabic derivative from *tab*, *maṭba'ah* (print shop), would become the common word for the Muslim printing companies in Singapore around the time many of them adopted typography. Prior to that, the most common phrase in the colophons of the lithographically printed books was that the text was printed on stone (*dicap [di atas] batu*) by someone (personal name) who owned the story (*yang empunya cerita*). After the introduction of typographically printed newspapers and texts by the Muslim printers the lithographic printing industry declined. The products of the typographic presses were appreciated for being clearer and thus better readable. Some printers apologized for still using lithography (Proudfoot 1986:111), or explained that they had changed to the superior technology of typography 'in response to persistent inquiries from purchasers' (Proudfoot 1994:37).

It is most likely then that Raja Ali Haji preferred typographically printed books above texts printed on a lithographic press that could be easily mistaken for handwritten manuscripts. In one of his letters he refers to the lithographed copy of his grammatical treatise sent to Von de Wall as 'recently written' (*baharu disurat*) and *not* as recently printed on their own printing press! (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:37). His concerns over the *Hikayat Golam* focused on the edition that was typographically printed by the Dutch company Lange in Batavia. In contrast, he wrote to

¹⁸ 'Yaitu nama bagi sesuatu daripada perak atau tembaga atau besi atau batu atau kayu atau lainnya. Maka disurat nama orang di situ dengan dipahatkan, kemudian apabila hendak memakainya ada surat-surat perkiriman maka dilayurnya pada pujuk api lilin atau lainnya' (Raja Ali Haji 1986/7:342).

¹⁹ 'Sesuatu pekerjaan pada menulis atau menyurat diperbuatnya satu acuan daripada timahkah, atau disurat pada kertas semula atau pada kain-kain yang berbunga-bunga sama-sama sekali sudah sekepingkah atau lebih' (Raja Ali Haji 1986/7:324, 342).

Von de Wali that the missing part of the *Syair Burung*, lithographically printed by a relative in Singapore, could be easily completed. If he could not find the last part of the poem, he would write it himself (Van der Putten and Al azhar 1995:80-1). This contrast could perhaps be interpreted as respect for the genre of *hikayat* and disrespect for the *syair*. However, it could also well be that, because the *hikayat* was printed by the Dutch on a typographic press, Raja Ali Haji regarded the *Hikayat Golam* as more important because it would reach a larger and more diverse audience. Whatever the reason may be for the lack of information about the lithographic press, the four texts mentioned above are the only lithographs that were printed at Penyengat that we know of. Printing in Riau would be continued by members of the Riau court by means of a number of books printed on a typographic press on the islands of Lingga and Penyengat in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Typographic Press in Riau

Around the turn of the century the indigenous printing industry in Singapore was shifting from lithography to typography. The market was flooded and partly taken over by neatly printed Islamic publications from the Middle East. This change in technology had far-reaching implications for the industry. Typography is a capital-intensive technology, it therefore needs a relatively large market and requires functional specialization. Consequently, the small Muslim printing industry, primarily lithographic in nature, which had flourished in the last two decades of the nineteenth century soon declined (Proudfoot 1994:33-8). In the same period European printing houses published large quantities of Malay textbooks in *jawi* as well as romanized Malay books. The indigenous periodical press that started in 1876 with the publication of the newspaper *Jawi Peranakan* adopted the typographic technology in a very early stage of its development (Proudfoot 1986:124).

In Riau the newly inaugurated Sultan, who resided on the island Lingga, obtained a typographic press that began to operate at the end of the 1880s. The first few years the press was stationed on this island, but in the beginning of the 1890s it was moved to the island of Penyengat, the seat of the Viceroy. The books printed on this press can roughly be divided into official texts, such as laws and rules for kings, and edifying Islamic books. When the press was still at Lingga, it published under three different imprints: *percetakan kerajaan Lingga*; *ofis cap kerajaan* (or: *gaberment*) *Lingga* or *Strait printing ofis*.²⁰ All three names clearly indicate the official

²⁰ For a list of works printed on both lithografic and typografic presses in Riau from 1856 to 1905, see Proudfoot 1993:674. In addition to this list, I would like to mention here the following two publications that do not appear in that study: Anonymous, 1321H (March 1903-March 1904), *Zikir Isim Zat ala al-Tariqah al-Naqshabandiah*.

nature of the press: it was a press owned and operated by the Sultan's administration. The English-derived name is an indication of the Sultan's orientation to Singapore, or, perhaps more significantly, to Johor. From the 1860s onward the Malay sultanate of Johor was rapidly developed into a modern state by its ruler Abu Bakar, who founded a bureaucracy headed by a Chief Minister, a Department of Education, a police force, and an army. In 1885 this development resulted in a new treaty with Britain recognizing the state and the territory of Johor governed by Abu Bakar. Ten years later, just prior to Abu Bakar's death in 1895, a constitution in Malay and English was promulgated that secured Johor's independence from the Federated Malay States. This true independence lasted for fourteen years, until in 1909 Johor collapsed under British pressure and became part of the Federated Malay States (Gray 1978:4-7).

Apart from being Lingga's model for a modern, independent Malay state, Johor was also Lingga's rival in assuming cultural hegemony in the Malay world. After the death of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah of Lingga in 1883, the Johor sovereign, Abu Bakar, claimed to be the most prominent ruler of the Malay world. The late Sultan of Lingga was considered to be a direct descendant of powerful Malay kings in the male line. Sulaiman's successor in Lingga, Abdul Rahman, who was installed in 1885, could only claim to be a descendant through his mother, who was a granddaughter of a former ruler of Johor. Eighteen years after having consulted with Raja Ali Haji in 1868 on his genealogy and on the title suited for the Johor ruler, Maharaja Abu Bakar was inaugurated as Sultan of the independent state of Johor on 1 July 1886 (Ahmad Fawzi Basri 1988:62-4).

In the few years the printing press was stationed at Lingga two texts containing rules for kings, written by Raja Ali Haji, were printed, the *Thamarat al-Muhimmat* (October 1886) and the *Mukadimmah fi Intizam* (1887). It is telling that, just after Abu Bakar's inauguration as Sultan, the texts were published by the Sultan of Lingga, who was surpassed as leader of the Malay world by Abu Bakar. Perhaps through the publication of these texts and with the help of Raja Ali Haji's reputation, the Lingga Sultan thought Riau could regain some of its lost power as mythical center of the Malay world.

After the press was moved to the island of Penyengat in the beginning of the 1890s, the impetus for printing activities seems to have been regaining some of its force. Lingga followed the example set by Johor to develop into a modern Islamic state. The press continued under the imprints of Matbaat al-Riauiat and the Matbaat al-Ahmadiat, referring to the location Riau and to Viceroy Raja Muhammad Yusuf's epithet of al-Ahmadi. These Arabic-derived names indicate a further adoption of Arabic

Pulau Penyengat: Matbaah al-Ahmadiyah (Katalog 1983: 24); Raja Muhammad Yusuf al-Ahmadi, s.a., *Wasiat Wakaf*. Pulau Penyengat: Matbaah al-Riauiat (Katalog 1983: 23).

as 'the language of the true civilisation and of that wider Islamic world of which they (the urban intelligentsia) felt themselves increasingly to be a part' (Roff 1967:48). Toward the end of the nineteenth century the Malay world focused its attention on the social and political changes propagated by reformist movements in the Middle East. Around the same time dramatic changes took place in the sultanate. The Viceroy died in 1899 after forty years in office. His would-be successor, Raja Ali Kelana, had been reluctant to succeed his father and the position was officially abolished in 1905, which caused much discontent with the dignitaries on Penyengat. The problems between the colonial government and the Malays in the realm mounted and eventually resulted in the official deposition and exile of the Sultan together with many of his dignitaries in 1911 (see Andaya 1977).

In the first decade of this century the most prominent members of the Riau court circles formed a cultural association known as the *Rushdiah Klab*, and became increasingly focused on Singapore. For instance, after Raja Ali Kelana came back from his unsuccessful voyage to the Middle East (October 1904-March 1905), in order to ask for support from the Turkish Sultan for the Riau cause against the colonial government, this Malay dignitary moved his business interests and his intellectual work to this center of the Malayo-Islamic world. One of the enterprises he helped finance was the printing company *Matbaat al-Imam*, which started operating in 1906 (Proudfoot 1994:37-8) and published several books originating from Riau, such as *Kumpulan Ringkas* by Raja Ali Kelana printed in typeset *jawi* in 1910 and the *Silsilah Melayu dan Bugis* by Raja Ali Haji printed in lithographed *jawi* in 1911. Politically more important and more widely discussed was the bi-monthly periodical *Al-Imam* that contained articles on religious and social topics, reflecting the ideas of the reformist movement in the Middle East. This periodical, which appeared from 1906 to 1908, was used by the Riau nobles as a means to express their desires and grievances (Andaya 1977:140).

At Penyengat the typographic press, 'having the smack of modernity about it' (Proudfoot 1994:48-9) when compared with the 'old-fashioned' lithographic press, was the instrument to be used to help establish an image of this modern state of Riau. In order to build this image, new laws were compiled and printed, such as the *Undang² Polisi* (Police Act) of 1893, the *Furu' al-Makmur Hukum Kanun* (Elaboration on the Canonical Law) printed in 1895. Other books were also printed to enhance the development of a modern-structured state: *Rumah Ubat di Pulau Penyengat* (The Medical Clinic at the Island of Penyengat; 1893), about medicines that could be obtained from this clinic and about the correct manners in dealing with a doctor (Katalog 1983:14); *Perhimpunan Plakat* (Collection of Decrees; 1899), containing decrees issued by the Malay Sultan that were sanctioned by the colonial government. Two other categories of books printed on typographic presses were 'modern' narratives of recent historical events and more 'traditional' moral admonitions. These categor-

ies are represented by a few titles in the collection that I shall briefly discuss here.

The first to appear was a *syair* about the visit of the Sultan and the Viceroy to Singapore and Johor written by Raja Khalid Hitam and published in November 1894: *Syair Perjalanan Sultan Lingga dan Yang Dipertuan Muda Riau Pergi ke Singapura dan Peri Keindahan Istana Sultan Johor yang Amat Elok* (Poem about the Trip of the Lingga Sultan and the Riau Viceroy to Singapore and about the Outstanding Beauty of the Palace of the Johor Sultan). It is 43 pages long in typeset *jawi* using one typefont in two different sizes. The typefont and the embellishments are the same as those which were used in the edition of the *Syair Hukum Nikah* (Poem of Marital Laws), published at Lingga in 1890/91 (1308H). The printing of the latter is done in a more accurate way, using the larger types for the headings of the different parts of the poem and filling the lines in the framed poem with dots or by adding a small connecting line between letters. The *syair* by Khalid Hitam about the Sultan's and the Viceroy's trip to Singapore uses the same method to fill the line but more often the space is filled by using the larger types whenever the words printed in small types would leave too much open space in the line.²¹

The Khalid Hitam-authored *syair* is of further interest because of the hope the author expresses at the end that, in its printed form, the *syair* would spread all over the world (*supaya berhamburan seluruh dunia*). Khalid Hitam also warns other printers not to print the book on their presses. The author calls it a sin and an act of treason, if they would not respect his copyrights on the book.²² A handwritten note on the flyleaf at the back of the copy held in the library of the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde in Leiden indicates that he actually registered the publication, probably with the Colonial Secretary's office in Singapore, which was required for books published in the Straits Settlements from 1886 onward (Proudfoot 1986:102).²³ The message gives us an indication that the *syair* was printed with commercial objectives and the note is proof that Singapore was the center the Malays in Riau focused on, not Batavia as the seat of the colonial overlord.

Another point of interest is that in the colophon a certain Ali ibn Ahmad Al-Attas is mentioned as the person who ordered and/or financed the printing: 'ala dimmah Ali ibn Ahmad Al-Attas' (Khalid Hitam 1894:42). This Arab is also mentioned as the sponsor of three consecutive texts printed at the press in Penyengat under both imprints, *Fawaid al-Wafiyat*

²¹ The types differ about 2 millimeters in size. The smaller type has an average size of two millimeters, the larger of four millimeters.

²² 'Dan jika diperbuat juga / di matbaat yang lain pula membuka / kenalah tuan dosa durhaka / hukum pencuri tiada berharga' (Khalid Hitam 1894:43).

²³ The note reads: 'Syair ini telah direjisterkan di dalam negeri Singapura pada 1312' (This *syair* has been registered in Singapore in 1312) (July 1894-July 1895).

(a Malay translation of a text by Sayid al-Syarif Abdullah bin Muhammad Saleh al-Zawawi), *Jadwal Takwim* (an almanac for use by mosque officials that has a reprint of the *Saat Musytari* in one of its foldout tables), and *Kafiyat al-Dhikr* (a Malay translation of an Arabic text by Muhammad Saleh al-Zawawi written in Riau on 18 June 1883 (12 Syaban 1300H) and printed on 4 July 1895 (11 Muharam 1313H) at the same place). I found no information on the sponsor Al-Attas,²⁴ but the authors of two of the texts are rather well known. Muhammad Saleh al-Zawawi was an Islamic scholar from Mecca who studied astrology and mathematics and was a member of the mystical Naqsyibandiyah order. He had close ties with the Riau court and spent the last years of his life in Riau. His son, Abdullah, had to leave Mecca in 1893, because of problems with the authorities there, and went to Singapore, Riau, Pontianak and Kutai to visit his late father's acquaintances and admirers, who gave him a warm welcome (Snouck Hurgronje 1959:1601-3). In the year following his visit to Riau the two books were published. The translation and printing of both texts by the Riau intellectuals gives an indication of their esteem for the two Arabic scholars. Moreover, these publications of texts by foreigners suggest that there was lack of local materials that were considered fit to be printed on the press. Through them the Riau nobles also made a contribution to an international debate in the Islamic world on religious reforms.

The question why members of the Riau elite printed texts can be answered in various ways, according to the subject matter of the printed text. The official texts are probably the most telling ones because through printing rules and regulations the sultanate presented itself to the outside world as a modern state with printed laws. The printing of Islamic texts may have been motivated by the desire to spread the religion and to take part in the reformist debate that was going on in the Islamic world. But, because of their popularity, commercial objectives may also have played a part. Furthermore, such objectives may also have formed the background of the decision to move the print shop from Lingga to Penyengat, where the distribution of the books to the book market of Singapore would be much easier. However, considering the whole production of the press of 23 texts over a period of eighteen years (1886-1904), not many of the texts can be classified as 'popular stories'. Certainly, the official pamphlets with regulations compiled by Raja Ali Kelana in the *Perhimpunan Plakat* (Collection of Decrees), printed in 1899, as well as *Taman Penghiburan* (The Garden of Leisure), printed in 1896, did not have commercial objectives. The latter is a small booklet of five pages printed in typeface

²⁴ There is a possibility that a brother of Salim ibn Ahmad Al-Attas held the position of *mufti* of Johor at that time. I am grateful to Dr. N. Kaptein for providing this information. It is interesting that the publication of these texts was financed by someone from outside the Riau court, something that provides another indication of close ties between Riau and Johor.

jawi containing a list of members of the Rushdiah Klab and the program of the celebrations of Idul Fitri of 1313 on 16 March 1896. Barnard, who recently discussed this booklet (Barnard 1994), describes this list in the context of changing attitudes of the Penyengat nobles to Western influences and focuses on the games organized for the celebration. A question that comes to mind in this context is why they printed a program of activities they would attend in the near future. Did they think it was important for future generations or the rest of the world to know that they engaged in certain children's games and to know who the members of their club were? Or was it a program distributed among possible participants in the celebrations, who had to show a ticket before they were admitted, as is indicated at the end of the text: 'whoever has a ticket is requested to show it to the committee'?²⁵ But what part of the population in the region would be able to read the announcement and the program?

I would suggest that Dutch officials also attended the festivities and that the booklet was printed in order to give a special touch of distinction to the occasion. This is supported by reports that the two parties paid each other visits on holidays such as New Year's Day and Idul Fitri (according to reports in Dutch Indies' newspapers), and the fact that Resident Van Hasselt was still in office just before he went back to Holland for reasons of health. During the 1890s the relationship between the colonial authorities and the Malay dignitaries seems to have been cordial. The relationship between Van Hasselt and Raja Ali Kelana in particular shows signs of mutual respect since as a farewell present the Dutch official was presented with a *syair* (*Syair Alif Ba Ta*) as well as a handwritten copy of the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (Matheson Hooker 1991:92-4), a very important text for the Bugis viceregal family.²⁶ So it was one of the last opportunities for members of the Penyengat elite and Van Hasselt to meet, and it could well be that the Malay party wanted to honor him with a big farewell celebration.²⁷ This would explain why the activities were all Western games, and not 'those commonly described for the Hari Raya festivities in Malay communities' (Barnard 1994:34). It would also account for the fact that there is no mention of the special communal morning prayers that were organized every year on the grounds of the central mosque. It is also another

²⁵ 'Barang siapa yang beroleh tiket hadir hendaklah menunjukkan kepada belaan majelis' (Barnard 1994:44).

²⁶ Resident Van Hasselt was favorably disposed towards Raja Ali Kelana, whom he considered to be the only person who could guarantee good relations between the two sides in the future (Van Hasselt 1896:11-2). It was only after his father had died that Raja Ali Kelana was seen by Dutch officials as the leader of the 'Bugis resistance group' opposed to the colonial government.

²⁷ The celebrations were held on 16 March 1896, two weeks later Van Hasselt received his farewell poem and just before he left in April he was presented with a manuscript of the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (Matheson Hooker 1991:93-4).

indication that the Riau elite used printed texts as a means to present themselves as a modern community.

This image building by means of typographic printing can also be detected in another product of this press: *Pohon Perhimpunan* (The Gathering Tree), a 46-page diary of an inspection tour made by Raja Ali Kelana together with a Dutch official to Pulau Tujuh, a group of islands in the South China Sea in 1896. The tour was commissioned by the Riau Viceroy and the printed edition is the official report on Raja Ali Kelana's findings. In this respect it is interesting that the Dutch official also published his report in the journal of the Dutch Geographical Society (Van Hasselt and Schwartz 1898). In both reports photographs are included, made by the Dutch official and put at Raja Ali Kelana's disposal. These illustrations, which were not printed with the press but tipped in (Proudfoot 1993:420), turned the Malay edition into a *de luxe* edition which was unequalled by any of the other Malay books in that period.²⁸ Through the publication of this edition the Malay nobles clearly showed their ability to produce books by implementing modern techniques imported from the West.

Conclusion

The development of printing in Riau went through two stages in close connection with the two different techniques that were used for it, lithography and typography. In the first stage some of Raja Ali Haji's texts were printed on the lithographic press at Penyengat. However, no one seems to have paid much attention to these activities and the Malay author himself requested for a typographic press from the colonial government in order to print his dictionary. Raja Ali Haji apparently regarded the lithographic press as a mechanical substitute for the scribe, who copied the texts by hand. Important works were neatly printed at the government printing office at Batavia, which he greatly admired. It was only after his death that a typographic printing press was obtained by the Sultan of Lingga and began printing his texts in a form Raja Ali Haji had wanted. However, times had changed and the Lingga-Riau sultanate was losing power because of the ongoing interference by the Dutch colonial government and because of rapid developments in Johor, which both induced the fading of the Riau star as mythical leader of the Malay world, especially after 1886 when Abu Bakar was inaugurated as Sultan. Through printing the Lingga sultanate tried to restore some of its lost power as the center of authority in the Malay world. It tried to present itself as a modern kingdom, with a bureaucracy, with printed reports of inspection tours, and with a police force organized by printed laws and regulations. At the same time

²⁸ Lithographed illustrations were very common in the books published by Chinese in Singapore and occasionally a photograph was also included in the edition; see Proudfoot 1994:19-21.

the Riau nobles wanted to take part in the debates about the reformist movement in the Islamic world. They took part in financing the publication of the reformist periodical *Al-Imam* and printed Islamic texts in Riau. All this was of little avail because after the Dutch government had enough of the 'troubles' caused by these nobles, it abolished the sultanate and expelled the ringleaders. During their exile the Riau nobles continued their writing and printing activities. Most of their texts were published by the Singaporean Al-Ahmadiyah Press, which was founded by a business association that had its roots in Riau. But never again during their lives would their names adorn publications printed on a press in their homeland.

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